1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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583 604 *The Number of Cows given for Sul* (bride-price). The number varies from two to five, according to what competition there is for the girl's hand. 'When a man's wife dies, and the cows have not yet been handed over, they must be paid. If this is not done, the parents-in-law may not ask for them, but some day, when the dead woman's son is at his uncle's house to attend some ceremony, they will refuse to allow him to participate.' Again, should his mother's mother ever express the wish to have a 'room', i.e. a shrine in charge of her grandson, this shrine can only be built by his mother's brothers. They will refuse to do this and so compel the payment of the *sul*. This sanction is very typical.

583 768 The cows paid for a woman become the property of the head of her house, not necessarily of her father. I asked if her mother got any, and was greeted with faces expressing almost consternation at the very thought of such a thing. 'She has been receiving five baskets of grain all the time from her son-in-law, why should she get any of the cows, and besides if my wife dies without a son, her relatives will come and claim all her property.' He added, 'Our ancestors too did not make a good law about a man (a clansman) getting our widows for nothing and any children we had by them.' As the heir may take them, this is not really any great hardship.

584 585 591 A marriage may be arranged by the parents when both the children are quite young. When the boy reaches puberty, his father will tell his elder brother, who is head of the compound, that the time has come for his son to marry. The father of the girl with whom the marriage has been arranged will make beer and call the senior 'father' of the youth and they will drink together. The father of the girl will then take his daughter's hand and give her to his friend, saying, 'There is your wife'. The 'father' of the youth then returns to his town, leaving the girl behind. A few days later, the girl is sent to his town accompanied by an old woman. She stays with the bridegroom's father's senior wife. A few days later, the 'father' of the bridegroom will send a member of his section with beer and a guinea-fowl to the bride's town, not to her 'father', but to the head of the section. This beer is to inform the spirits and the living about the marriage. It is called *sindan dam* (compare *sandono* in Nankanse marriage custom). Unless the *sindan* beer is given, the marriage is not considered legal; 'a man must cook this beer'. After the bride has spent three or four days at the bridegroom's compound, the boy's real father will tell his brother that he wishes to give the girl to his son. The senior wife

1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920)1932
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of the head of the compound will, one evening, tell the bride to take fire (a faggot) to the bridegroom's hut in order that she may have light 'to sweep the floor', and she will add, 'you need not return'. Next morning people will know that the girl is So-and-so's wife. (I asked my informant if the youth for whom this marriage had been arranged knew all about it. He replied: 'The father of the youth would always be performing small services for his *dem* (in-laws), such, for example, as sending them fire-wood. The future bridegroom would be used as a messenger on such occasions and in this manner would get to know his future wife.') A man's senior 'father' is responsible for finding the cows for the bride-price (*sul*). If a man wants a second or third wife, he will help his father by giving some of his own cows, if he has got any by his own labours. 'If your father is too poor and your mother's brother is a rich man, he may pay for the cows for your wife, but that becomes a debt, for if you do not pay him back, he will claim your children after your death. You will pay him back by using the cows you receive for your own daughter.'

'A son-in-law will work on his *dem-pok's* ground-nut farm (*suma-pog*) once a year and help her in the sowing and harvest, and also assist his father-in-law in building. He will do all this until his wife bears him a child and then cease doing so, because then he will be looking out for a new wife and have then to work for these new in-laws. Every new harvest he will take new beer (*da'-palem*) and a guinea-fowl and go with his wife to visit his parents-in-law. On this occasion, the wife becomes like a man, by virtue of her husband, and gives the guinea-fowl as an offering to her father's spirit, or if he is alive, to his *Wen* (*Yini* shrine). If she were an unmarried girl at home, she could not do so. A son-in-law attends his parents-in-law's funeral, taking a sheep and goat and beer. He will also attend a brother-in-law's funeral taking a pot of beer "to pour on the grave" (*se yaug*). A son-in-law will also assist in digging a parent-in-law's grave, and even sleep at his village and resume digging next morning and dig out all the stones. When we dig a grave and come down to rock, we generally place an egg there, and fill in the hole, but when a man has many sons-in-law they will dig up the rock. As long as a man's wife has not borne a child, the son-in-law must send his mother-in-law five baskets of grain each new harvest. He stops doing so when she has a child, for after that they will at once demand payment of the *sul* (bride-price).'

'A man must respect his parents-in-law; if he offends them, he

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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613 constituent parts. The simplest way of achieving this is for its internal differentiation into segments to be of a limited and balanced kind. That is why only the first order of segmentation, a division into major segments, is recognized in the corporate activities of a lineage. In Tale theory the source of this primary segmentation of the lineage is the minimal lineage, in which a group of brothers (two or more) are differentiated from one another as individuals each of whom is the potential founder of a new lineage, but are united through their common father. A pair of brothers by the same father (*sunzɔp*, sing. *sunzɔ*) are the potential originators of a pair of major segments of the lineage deriving from their father. So all major segments of a lineage of any span are visualized as being derived from brothers, sons of the lineage founder, and are described as *sunzɔp* to one another. Their lineage ties, summed up in the concept *sunzɔt* (brotherhood), are thought of as being founded on, and derived from, the ties that hold between brothers. By the rule of exogamy women members marry out of the lineage, so they do not contribute to its perpetuation and do not affect its organization.

613 595 The growing-point of the lineage, it will be seen, is the family. It is always patrilocal; ideally, it is also polygynous. Thus children of the same [59] man are differentiated from one another as children of different mothers. This provides a further criterion of differentiation within the lineage. Like the sons of different mothers and the same father, segments of a lineage may, in certain situations, be distinguished from one another by reference to their different progenitrices. In other situations, like the sons of one mother, segments of a lineage may be grouped together by reference to a common progenitrix.

613 A maximal lineage cannot, by definition, have any *sunzɔp* identified strictly in terms of common agnatic descent. If it had it would be a segment of a more inclusive lineage. The ancestor who founded it must be unique, in retrospect. As we have seen, he may be accounted for by a myth; but his unique place in the genealogical tree can sometimes be naturalistically explained. If the formation of recent lineage segments is studied, it can be seen that segments sometimes disappear, owing to the extinction of a branch of the lineage. When this happens, the surviving segments reach a new equilibrium. The defunct collateral line is forgotten in due course, together with its genealogy; for this no longer has any structural significance. Thus an existing maximal lineage may be merely the surviving segment of what might have been a wider maximal lineage.

It is characteristic of Tale social organization, however, that maximal lineages do often have *sunzɔp*, either through ties of clanship, or by incorporating, or being joined to, lineages not strictly of the same agnatic descent.

A lineage is a temporal system. Continuity in time is its fundamental quality. Its constitution and dimensions at a given time represent a phase of a process which, as the natives see it, has been going on in exactly the same way from the beginning of their social order and is continuing into the future. The contemporary phase of a lineage is more than a product of its past; it embodies all the significant changes that have occurred in it

2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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CHAPTER IX

THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN THE CLAN ORGANIZATION

The Concept of a Clanswoman

WE have occasionally referred to the role of women in the clan organization of the Tallensi, but this subject deserves further consideration. In a certain sense women illustrate the principle of the corporate unity and identity of lineage and clan more strikingly than men. On marriage women leave their paternal settlements to reside with their husbands. They never, however, lose their status as members of their own patrilineal lineage and clan. It is true that they have not the same jural rights and duties as their clan brothers and cannot exercise a responsible role in lineage or clan ritual; for, as we shall see in the second part of this study,[1] a woman is a minor in jural and ritual matters. Nevertheless, women are subject to the critical norms of clanship in the same way as men. They are bound by the same rules of exogamy as the men, and by the same ritual observances that distinguish maximal lineage from maximal lineage or clan from clan. They also have certain privileges as members of their patrilineal descent group. We deal with these points in outline here. The details will come more appropriately in our next volume.

The term *pɔŋayabəlɔg* sums up the status of a woman as a member of her patrilineal maximal lineage and clan. It can best be translated as 'woman of the clan'; and it refers to a woman of the clan or maximal lineage whether she is residing at her father's house or living with her husband. *Pɔŋayabəlɔg* denotes the general status of clanswoman irrespective of what segment of the clan she may belong to. At all funeral ceremonies, for instance, certain duties and tasks both of a ritual and non-ritual kind fall on *pɔŋayabəlis*. Some of these tasks, such as the gathering of firewood, are usually performed by young unmarried *pɔŋayabəlis*. The girls who volunteer for these tasks are treated as a single group, irrespective of what segment of the clan they belong to. Other tasks and ritual duties that have to be carried out by clanswomen fall upon older women, usually married women who return home specially for the funeral. Any woman of the clan who is qualified by her knowledge and seniority can perform these duties. If a married woman living with her husband is asked where she comes from, she always replies: 'I am a *pɔŋayabəlɔg* of such-and-such a clan.'

It is a maxim that all *pɔŋayabəlis* are equal to one another in relation to their natal clan. 'No one owns a *pɔŋayabəlɔg*, we all own her (*sɔ pu so pɔŋayabəlɔg, ti waabi nso ka*)', is the native formula. The implication is that the clan as a whole is the primary unit claiming the allegiance of a

[1] Forthcoming shortly under the title of *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi*.

562
618x
[591]
[p. 147]

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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602 and Ɔndieso was one of the first to come to the help of his *soog* in his 578 sorrow. The other members of Ɔndieso's segment demonstratively remained away.

602 Other ties of matrilateral kinship also create bonds of personal attachment between members of the same maximal lineage, but none is so effective as that of uterine kinship.

The Dispersion of Uterine Kin

602 The majority of a person's uterine kin are, however, dispersed among 582 other clans than his own. This is a natural result of the rule of clan 591 exogamy. But Tallensi, as we shall see later,[1] tend to marry into nearby clans rather than into distant clans. A woman of clan A marries into the adjacent clan B; her daughters marry into the next clans C and D; their daughters marry into clans E and F; and so the process goes on. The result is, firstly, that with the passage of the generations the uterine line becomes more and more dispersed; and secondly, that any person's genealogically nearest uterine kin are also, generally, his spatially nearest uterine kin. In practice, it is these near *saarət* whom he knows and knows of; it is they who are concerned in witchcraft accusations or *tyuk* guilt. His more distant *saarət*—distant in both the genealogical sense and in residence—are often unknown to him. The main reason for this is that uterine kinship remains effective only through personal contact. The children of sisters know one another because their mothers have kept in touch, visited one another, and often helped one another all their lives. Similarly, the uterine grandchildren of sisters know one another, if they live near one another, because their mothers have kept in touch, though not so faithfully as true siblings. Often these contacts are maintained into the fourth generation of a woman's uterine descendants; rarely beyond the fourth generation; and a person does not, as a rule, know all his or her *saarət* whose link with him or her is a common great-grandmother. Some of them will, as likely as not, be Gorisi or Namnam and he will not even know of their existence.

602 In principle, however, uterine kinship is never extinguished, and it often happens that people of different clans, who are strangers to one another, discover by chance that they are distant *saarət*. Supposing, [F169] for instance, a man proposes to make an important sacrifice to a lineage ancestor. His agnatic co-descendants of this ancestor are bound to be present; but he will also send to tell the cognatic descendants through women of that ancestor and some of them will come. Two men of different clans may be present who now discover, for the first time, that they are cognatically related through the lineage of their host. They trace out their genealogical connexion (*tumh dɔŋam*) and find that they are distant *saarət*. I have seen this happen more than once, and the delight of the men concerned was a vivid testimony to the meaning

[1] Cf. Ch. XI.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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ritually 'pegged (*ba'*)'—fastened to life, as it were—and is henceforth regarded as human. But whether either or both of the twins survive, the parents have to undergo a course of ritual purification after their birth. This is believed to act as a magical safeguard against the recurrence of such a misfortune besides cleansing them of the ill luck that has occurred.

In spite of this mystical background, twins that survive are regarded and treated as ordinary human beings. But there is one point on which very great stress is laid. Twins must be treated exactly alike by their parents. 'If you give one a portion of porridge you must give the other an equal portion; if you give one a penny you must give the other a penny', said one informant. If they are brothers, they will live together all their lives. If they are sisters they must be married to the same settlement[1] or to adjacent and interlinked settlements. For it is as if they are one person and yet are two. They are completely equal, completely equivalent siblings; and if they are not so treated, *ba ku nye ɔmma*, things will not turn out well for them.

Rights and duties become important in adulthood, when they are actively claimed and discharged; and it is in the social relations of adults that the equivalence of siblings becomes conspicuous. It is best exemplified in three institutions, the levirate, the rules of inheritance and succession, and the extension of patrilineal, matrilateral, and sororal kinship ties. We have dealt with various aspects of these subjects in preceding chapters. Brief recapitulation with reference to the present context is all that is needed here. The kinship aspect comes up again in the following chapter. But before we look again at the levirate and at the rules of inheritance, it is worth noting some of the minor indications of the equivalence of siblings.

There is, firstly, the idea that the bride-price received for a girl should be earmarked for the payment of the bride-price for the wife of her closest brother. This convention is not strictly upheld, for the deciding

artificial feeding is unknown to the Tallensi. During our stay among them two pairs of twins and a set of triplets (who are treated in exactly the same way as twins) were born to people known personally to my wife and me. Even to a layman's eye it was obvious that the triplets were doomed from the first, both because they were so puny and because the mother was so utterly exhausted. Of the two pairs of twins, only one child survived the first few weeks of life, and this child, when last heard of, did not seem to have a very good chance of reaching childhood. I do not know what the incidence of twin births is among the Tallensi. The best-known owner of twin medicine at Tongo told me he had had five cases during the past two years or so and of these only one child was still alive. I knew only one pair of living twins, aged about 7 or 8, among all the children—easily running into three figures—whom my wife and I got to know throughout Taleland. Single survivors of twins are more common and I knew four. Thus the native view of the high mortality of twins appears to be justified by the facts.

[1] They are, of course, not a pair of successive sisters, so the concept of *nyaar* (*v. supra*, p. 253) does not apply.